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DEPT PASS TDA FOR STEIN AND GREENIP  
USOECF FOR ENERGY ATTACHE  
CENTCOM FOR CSTC-A  
NSC FOR JWOOD  
TREASURY FOR LMC DONALD, ABAUKOL, BDAHL, AND MNUGENT  
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SUBJECT: JCMB VII - TOKYO POLITICAL DIRECTOR'S MEETING ON AFGHANISTAN STRUGGLES ON THEME, BUT IS STILL THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On February 5 in Tokyo, Japanese Foreign Minister Komura, Afghan Foreign Minister Spanta, and Acting Special

Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Asplund kicked off the annual Political Director (PD)-level gathering of the seventh Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB). The meeting yielded a steady chorus of long speeches and familiar themes covering a four-hour span, but struggled to define a common theme after UNAMA's integrated strategy paper, which was to have been the basis for the PD discussion, got pulled by the Afghan delegation at the proverbial eleventh hour. JCMB delegates (except for the U.S.) were conspicuously silent on the issue of appointing a new, high-level U.N. Special Representative to Afghanistan (though this point was added to the final version of the PD Communique). France announced it would host an international conference on Afghanistan in June [1](#)2008. Most delegates also spoke approvingly of the plan to expand the size of the Afghan National Army by ten thousand, an increase from its current ceiling of 70,000 to 80,000. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Although UNAMA's integrated strategy discussion paper was pulled by the Afghan Government (the Afghans said they did not require another strategy document), the need for a more combined donor approach linking security to development persisted throughout many subsequent interventions by delegations. In deference to Afghan objections, delegates danced around the term "integrated" and instead called for "all-encompassing", "comprehensive", "multi-faceted" and "holistic" strategies. Despite the semantics, the meeting yielded no obvious next steps on this issue. Except for the U.S. intervention, there was a noticeable absence of dialogue during the more than twenty interventions about the appointment of a new, high-level U.N. Special Representative to Afghanistan (though this point was added to the final version of the PD Communique).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Afghan officials sounded familiar themes during their presentations. Foreign Minister Spanta cited Afghanistan's numerous

achievements since 2001 but also outlined ongoing challenges, particularly terrorism and drugs. Co-chair Nadiri called the JCMB the central forum for coordinating the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), and promised the ANDS would be ready "in a few months." Nadiri made no mention of the Paddy Ashdown withdrawal or the need to quickly nominate another candidate as U.N. Special Representative. National Security Advisor Rassoul thanked the U.S. and NATO countries for their contributions, and said the security environment in Afghanistan, while challenging, was overall much improved compared to 2006. Rassoul called on JCMB delegations to support the proposal to increase the size of the Afghan National Army by 10,000 (COMMENT - this action was subsequently endorsed the following day at the JCMB Ambassadorial-level meeting. END COMMENT). Finance Minister Ahady urged donors not to exaggerate problems or overlook successes despite the negative press that Afghanistan was increasingly attracting. Ahady said that Afghanistan's effort to engage in nation-building, state-building, and democratization simultaneously was unprecedented, but that progress was being achieved. Ahady welcomed the call for a major donor conference in June 2008, but restated his usual appeal for donors to channel bilateral assistance through Afghan budgetary channels. Director of the Independent Local Governance program, Jelani Popal, laid out a framework for drilling down to the provincial and district level to establish more government presence and efficiency of services at the local level. Popal's comments were well received by delegates.

14. (SBU) During the U.S. intervention, head of delegation AmEmbassy Kabul DCM Amb. Chris Dell applauded the establishment of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance as an effective focal point for coordinated efforts to strengthen local governance and improves services and security. He also called for the appointment of a strong figure as the U.N. Special Representative to Afghanistan to improve coordination between civilian and security efforts. Dell urged donors to muster the political will to provide more security and development resources, including an immediate need to finance voter registration efforts -- that must get underway this summer -- as a first step toward successful elections in 2009. He also expressed full U.S. support for the proposal to raise the ceiling of the Afghan National Army by ten thousand.

15. (SBU) The retinue of speeches by JCMB member delegations were a combination of donors monotonously touting their own development achievements, outlining challenges ahead, and offering generic suggestions for improving aid coordination. The discussion was flavored from time to time with subtle regional posturing, but the dialogue remained positive and constructive overall. Donors were in agreement that annual high-level gatherings of the JCMB, held in a foreign capital outside Kabul, were a useful opportunity to keep Afghanistan's security and development needs in the spotlight.

16. (SBU) Country-by-country interventions revealed some new details but were, for the most part, rhetorically generic. France publicly acknowledged it would host an international conference to be held in Paris during the month of June 2008. China extolled the benefits Afghanistan would reap as a result of its winning bid on the Aynak copper deposit mine, including: up to \$400 million in annual domestic revenue, railroad construction and other new infrastructure links to Central Asian neighbors. Iran and Pakistan avoided controversial statements and emphasized Afghan stability as a vital component to regional cooperation. Between complements to the Afghan Government and international community, Russia took verbal swipes at the poor quality of training for the Afghan National Army, as well as what it viewed as the unbalanced ethnic composition of the armed forces. No new financial pledges were made during the course of the Political Directors session, though Norway did indicate it had raised its annual commitment to Afghan reconstruction by 50 percent per year. Japan also announced \$110 million in "new" assistance, but in subsequent bilateral meetings this was confirmed to be just an unspent portion of its 2006 London pledge.

17. (SBU) COMMENT. As mentioned above, the JCMB PD-level meeting did not produce any insightful new solutions on the issue of donor coordination, and aside from a few nuggets (i.e. the June 2008 Paris donor conference) did not yield any surprising developments. The meeting plodded along in a formulaic and sometimes confused fashion, compounded by the fact that the Afghan delegation did not issue finalized conference papers until right before the meeting. The Afghans' disorganization led to some grumbling and calls for a strengthening of the overburdened JCMB Secretariat. This made the clear lack of urgency in finding a successor candidate to Paddy

Ashdown ironic. And yet the act of another high-level meeting on Afghanistan in a G8 capital, with full participation from an ideologically and geographically disparate cast of donors, succeeded in keeping the international spotlight on Afghanistan. For all its faults, the primacy of the JCMB as the international community's preferred donor coordination mechanism for Afghanistan does not seem in jeopardy. END COMMENT.

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